



CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

20 September 1966

MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. Walt W. Rostow
Special Assistant to the President

SUBJECT: Senatorial Briefing

1. Pursuant to your call on 2 September, forwarding the President's desire that I brief Senators Mansfield, Russell, and Fulbright on the findings of the "Will to Persist" study, I met with these gentlemen at 9:30 on 19 September, every effort to make an earlier arrangement having been to no avail. Mr. William Darden, Professional Staff Member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, was the only other person present in the room except for [redacted] and John Warner of this Agency, the former an economist who had worked on the study, the latter being the officer responsible for congressional liaison.

2. I presented the core of the "Will to Persist" study orally, and answered a variety of questions about force levels, infiltration rates, and related military questions. Then, to make certain that all of the findings had been given proper emphasis, I handed each of the Senators a summary of these points, so that they could read together precisely the same language as was used in the study. When they had finished reading, the discussion began and lasted until 10:30.

3. In point of fact, the three Senators talked largely among themselves, and it was clear that positions which each had previously held about the Vietnamese war failed to be influenced by the material in the study. Senator Fulbright quite clearly remains convinced of two particular viewpoints: (a) He is persuaded that the Vietnamese war was initially a civil war, that it has always been a civil war, and that it has been internationalized by the United States in recent times; (b) He believes that Mendes-France, with whom he said he had talked, pulled the French Government out of Indo-China, not because the French people did not have the will

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to fight, but because it was the intelligent thing to do in light of economic resources of France which were being "wasted" in an unimportant country of the world. Senator Fulbright voiced the opinion that the Administration should pay attention to Anthony Eden's recent book which Dean Acheson reviewed favorably in THE WASHINGTON POST (the book is entitled "Toward Peace in Indo-China").

4. At another point in the discussion, Senator Fulbright expressed his disagreement with the contention which he claims Secretary Rusk has made, i.e. that the United States military presence in Vietnam is keeping the Chinese from expanding into Southeast Asia. The Senator commented that Communist China is in a bad mess politically and economically and that she is not going anywhere outside her borders for a long time to come.

5. At one point, Senator Fulbright asked me if the purpose of my briefing on the study findings was designed to stop Senator Mansfield and himself from criticizing the Administration's handling of the Vietnamese situation. I replied, "I received no such instructions from the President or anyone else. I was simply asked to present to you gentlemen together the results of this study." Senator Fulbright immediately dropped the issue.

6. Senator Russell stated that he had been interested in the content of the briefing and that he would have by himself come to essentially the same conclusions, although perhaps not couched in such "fine phrases". Senator Mansfield, as he left the gathering, commented that he was particularly pleased to note that the Agency had presented to the President such an objective and thorough report.

7. To summarize, I truly believe that the briefing was useful, but I am equally convinced that it did little to change the views of the three Senators present.

8. Please let me know if you want more detail.

Richard Helms
Director

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